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AN

ESSAY,

INTENDED TO ESTABLISH

A STANDARD

FOR AN

Universal System

OF

STENOGRAPHY,

OR

SHORT-HAND WRITING.



BY

SAMUEL TAYLOR,

Many years Professor and Teacher of the Science at Oxford, and the
Universities of Scotland and Ireland.



HALLOWELL:

PRINTED BY CALVIN SPAULDING.

1826.

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RECOMMENDATION.



From numerous pupils, as well as from others who are allowed to be the best judges of the science in Europe, Mr. TAYLOR has received the most honorable testimonials. Of this fact the following from Dr. BEATTIE, of the Marischal College, Aberdeen, is an evident proof; and as this gentleman is universally known and esteemed, I shall here take the liberty to insert his recommendation of Mr. TAYLOR's plan.

“MARISCHAL COLLEGE, 24th Feb. 1783.

Of all the systems of short-hand that I have seen, and I have looked into several, Mr. TAYLOR's appears to me to be incomparably the best. The art seems to be hardly susceptible of further improvement.

[Signed]

J. BEATTIE,

Professor of Moral Philosophy.”

AN ESSAY, &c.



THE alphabet being the first thing that comes under our consideration, I shall omit troubling the learner with an unnecessary harrangue upon the different sounds of our common alphabetical letters, but only observe, that we shall have no occasion for them all, as there are not more than twenty proper sounds required for the use of shorthand.

Upon this plan, the alphabet will be reduced to a less number of letters than are made use of in our common writing; I shall therefore begin with selecting and arranging the common letters requisite for the sounds required, and then proceed to appoint characters proper to represent them; for which purpose I shall first examine the consonants, and afterwards the vowels.

The consonants which are necessary for our purpose are, *b d f g h j k l m n p q r s t v w x y*; so that *c* and *z* are of no use in a stenographic alphabet. The letter *c* having both a hard and soft sound, similar to *k* and *s*, they will supply its place, according as it sounds. The letter *z* is omitted by reason of its sound being the same as *s* hard, so that *s* is written in its stead. The letters *f* and *v* being similar in sound, one character is sufficient to represent both;—*g* and *j*, for the same reason are represented by one character;—*k* and *q* being somewhat alike in sound, have only one character for both, so that our alphabet will stand thus: *b, d, f* or *v, g* or *j, h, k* or *q, l, m, n, p, r, s, t, w, x, y*; together with a few double consonants, in order to complete the sounds required, and to facilitate the writing, which are *ch**, *sh*, *th*, and the termination *ious*.

Having thus determined the consonants necessary to express the various sounds, we must next consider the means of obtaining a proper set of characters to represent them; for the alphabet being the foundation upon which the whole entirely depends, a due regard to the choice of characters

* Though we can with propriety omit the letter *c*, as before mentioned, yet that consonant when followed by *h*, makes a distinct sound, and must have a character to represent them, though we can often write *k* for *ch*, when the sound is similar thereto.

to represent the sounds of our common alphabetical letters, is one of the nicest and most essential perfections of the art. And as my intention is to go on step by step in a regular and concise manner, throughout the whole, I shall proceed with explaining my method of obtaining the characters, and the application of them, that the learner may have a just idea of their origin, and appointment of the different letters made use of in our alphabet.

I believe it will be allowed that the most simple marks that can be obtained, are dots, straight lines, and circles. From these (and not from any characters I have seen in the various methods of short-hand hitherto published) are the characters I make use of derived: to explain which I shall first begin with the circle, which will not of itself make any proper character for joining with others of a well-chosen alphabet, but a semicircle makes an excellent character.—By dividing a circle with an horizontal line, we obtain two semicircles, which are most proper to represent *k* or *q*, and *n*. Another circle being divided by a perpendicular line, we have two other semicircles, which are appointed to represent *g* or *j* and *ch*; and are all the circle will afford us.

The straight lines are the next I shall consider, as the dot is the representative of all the vowels, and will be treated of in its place accordingly.—There are four straight lines only fit for our use, viz. one horizontal, one perpendicular, and two oblique; and the most eligible and simple sounds they can represent, are the following consonants. The oblique line drawn downwards to the left, represents *d**; that to the right, *f* or *v*; the horizontal *s*; and the perpendicular *t*.

Thus our straight lines and semicircles being exhausted, and only eight characters obtained, we must fall upon some plan for procuring the remainder; and as we cannot join these characters together to form others, without running into the greatest errors, which is the case with most alphabets I have seen, and is what I mean in the introduction by a combination of characters, must have recourse to the straight lines again, by looping and curving them as in the alphabet.—The five looped characters obtained this way are those that represent *b*, *h*, *l*, *m*, *p*, and are all the characters of this kind that can be properly used, though some inadvertantly use more. The curved

* The same line always drawn upwards, is an excellent and expeditious character for *r*, when joined to another letter.

ones, are procured by adding a curve or small crook to such of the straight lines as are most fitting for our purpose, and are those that represent *x*, *y*, *sh*, *th*, and *ious*, and are always made as they stand in the alphabet. These are all that are required, except *w*, and *r*, the first of which is procured by looping a semicircle, and the common *r* represents itself when alone: and to render the whole fully complete, I have added easy marks for *&c.* and *viz.* and also for a few terminations, which are so simple, that they cannot be taken notice of in the alphabet, but are explained in the rules for writing.

Now these characters being completely assigned to their proper sounds, it is requisite for the further facilitating the writing, that every proper use be made of them, consistent with the plan of clearness and simplicity I set out with: wherefore a proper set of words for these letters to represent when written singly, is highly and absolutely necessary; and those set down in the alphabet I have found to be generally the most useful for the beginner, as well as the practitioner.

The most simple marks or characters are assigned to represent the most useful letters of our common alphabet; and the whole are so simple in themselves, that any person capable of writing, may make them without the least difficulty; one running through another in the way of joining, forces expedition, as it were, even upon an inactive writer, and are proportionably easy to be retained.

The alphabet being thus concisely settled, I shall next proceed to consider the vowels, and the application of them. A dot thus . being the most simple mark that can be made, it is here appointed the representative of all the vowels; which are always omitted in the middle of a word, as also at the beginning or end, when they are silent, as then the consonants alone will sufficiently convey the sound of such words; but when a vowel sounds strong before or after any word, it is proper to express it by a dot, to denote that the word begins or ends with a vowel of a forcible sound. Custom will clearly prove this maxim to be well founded, and that all the vowels can be thus omitted, and yet leave the writing perfectly intelligible. But to agree with most writers in their manner of placing the vowels, I must beg leave to decline: Some place the dot at the top of the first or last letter in the word for *a*, a little lower for *e*, sometimes lower still for *i*, and so on in order for *o*, *u*, and *y*.^{*}—But is it possi-

* *r* being a vowel when it ends a word, is expressed by a dot, the same as other vowels.

ble that any one should be able to place the dot in this regular manner when expedition is required? Will he not be liable to read wrong if the dot be misplaced, and so be prevented from deciphering? Besides it will greatly retard the writing, and be a means of inuring the practitioner to a bad habit.—On the contrary, when a vowel at the beginning or end of a word is required to be expressed, if a dot be placed any where by the side of that consonant to which it belongs, it cannot properly be mistaken, as the consonant will give the vowel its proper sound, and a little practice will render it quite familiar.

With regard to the single vowels, there are but three of them that stand alone in the English language (for which short-hand is chiefly calculated,) wherefore the single dot will always be *a*, *i*, or *o*; *e* and *u* never being alone.

Having thus considered both the consonants and vowels, and affixed proper characters to represent each, I shall here direct the learner how he is to begin each character, that he may not be at a loss on his first attempting to make any of them.

In the looped characters *b*, *h*, *l*, *m* and *p*, the learner must observe to begin with the loop or cypher part, and in writing he may turn them either way for the convenience of joining; that is, the loop may be made on either side of the line, provided they are always looped at that end of it as they stand in the alphabet. The oblique line *d*, is always made downwards to the left; that of *f* or *v* downwards to the right: the horizontal line *s* is drawn from the left to the right, and the perpendicular line *t* always straight downwards: the semicircle *g* or *j* is begun at the top and turned downwards: *k* or *q* and *n* are turned from the left towards the right, and *ch* is begun at the top, similar to a common *c*: that which is looped for *w*, is begun with the loop, and turned either way, as is before mentioned of the other looped characters: the crooked lines, *x*, *y*, *sh*, and *th*, must be begun with the crook; and that of *i*ous, must always end with it.

These directions, if properly observed, will be of real use to the learner, as he will have a considerable advantage in knowing how to begin each letter, when he first attempts to join letters together, in order to write words; and for his further assistance, I have given tables of the manner of joining characters, which are hereafter explained.

The first thing the learner attempts, must be a knowl-

edge of the alphabet; which he must have so well grounded on the memory, as to be able to write any letter without hesitation: and after them, the general words the letters stand for; when he must proceed to understand the meaning of the following rules for writing, which are so clearly laid down, that he will soon be able to join his letters in a proper manner; and by a little practice, he, in a few days, will be able to write correctly: but if he does not proceed regularly, according to the rules herein prescribed, he must expect to be incorrect in his writing, which he may be assured will confound him in the deciphering.



INSTRUCTIONS FOR WRITING.

RULE I.—As it is here a fixed rule to write according to the sound of words, without any regard to spelling; so it is also, to finish the word before we lift the pen, except where we have occasion to dot, or when we express the terminations, *ing*, *ings*, and *tions*.

RULE II.—It has been before observed, that all vowels are represented by a dot, and that they are only used when they sound strong at the beginning or end of a word: But further observe, that when there is occasion to express a vowel before or after any word, place the dot for such vowel near to the word to which it belongs, that it may not be mistaken for a single vowel; and the single vowel must be kept at a proper distance to prevent its being taken for a vowel belonging to a word. Example, *vide* Plate II. No. 1, *which immediately follows these Rules*.

RULE III.—When a diphthong, or two vowels begin or end any word, write only one dot, which is always sufficient (with the sounding consonants of such a word) to convey the proper sound. Ex. No. 2.

RULE IV.—*B* can often be omitted, and yet leave the word clear enough to be understood. Ex. No. 3.

RULE V.—The letter *c*, as before mentioned, having both a hard and soft sound, very similar to *k* and *s*, they will supply its place, according as it sounds. Ex. No. 4.

RULE VI.—*D* at the end of words may often be written *t*, but this is left to the choice of the writer, according as he finds it most plain and easy to himself. Ex. No. 5.

F or *v* require no explanation.

RULE VII.—*G* and *h* when meeting together, are never written but when they sound like *f*, then that letter is written in their stead. Ex. No. 6.

RULE VIII.—*H* is omitted in the middle of words, and very often at the beginning, by expressing the following vowel. Ex. No. 7.

K or *q* need no explanation.

RULE IX.—To express *ly*, at the end of a word, write a dot under the bottom of the last letter. Ex. No. 8.

RULE X.—The letter *m* will be found very necessary to represent the terminations *ment* or *ments*; and though some words end with *m*, yet the sense will clearly shew when it is a termination. Ex. No. 9.

N requires no explanation.

RULE XI.—*Ph* when together, sounding similar to *f*,—*f* is always substituted. Ex. No. 10.

RULE XII.—*R*, when joined to another letter, is made the same as *d*, only with this difference, that *r* is a scratch stroke upwards, and *d* downwards. Ex. No. 11.

The common *r* is only used when there is no other consonant in the word; or when two of them are required to be written together, without any other consonant, then to express both, make a scratch *r*, and a small common *r* at the top. Ex. No. 12.*

But when two *r*'s are joined to any other consonant, then the scratch *r* is made a double length. Ex. No. 13.†

S and *t* require no explanation.

RULE XIII.—*W* may be omitted in many words, and yet leave the writing perfectly intelligible. Ex. No. 14.

X needs no explanation.

RULE XIV.—*Y* is only written at the beginning of a word, at the end (being a vowel) is expressed by a dot, the same as other vowels. Ex. No. 15.

RULE XV.—*Ch*, *sh*, and *th*, the learner must observe to write whenever either of these double consonants happen in a word. Ex. No. 16.

RULE XVI.—The *ious* character is used for the terminations *ious*, *eous*, *uous*, and *ius*. Ex. No. 17.

* In these kind of words name the letters singly, thus, *err*, *rre*, *rr*, which will give the word its proper sound.

† And the same with this Example in naming the letters *trr*, *hrr*.—I mention this to remind the learner of paying a due regard to the sound of letters as well as words.

RULE XVII.—When two of the same consonants meet together in a word, write only one of them; but observe, that when a vowel or diphthong is between two such consonants, both of them must be written, some words excepted, where one will be found sufficient: and observe further, that to write two letters of the same name together, is only making the loops larger, the semicircles larger, and the straight lines longer, which may clearly be seen in the tables of joining; but I shall give an Example No. 18.*

RULE XVIII.—For the terminations *ing* and *ings*, use a mark thus '. But to distinguish the plural from the singular, make that for *ing* by the side of the last letter in the word, and for *ings* at the bottom. Ex. No. 19.

RULE XIX.—The most proper mark to represent the termination† *tion* or *sion*, is a dot always placed above the last consonant in the word. And for *tions* or *sions*, use a mark thus ' also above. Ex. No. 20.

RULE XX.—Some compound words I would advise the learner to write singly, as he will find them much easier to write, as well as decipher. Ex. No. 21.

Names of particular persons and places (which the learner is unacquainted with) may at the first be written in common writing; but by practice he will speedily be able to writethem in short-hand, without running any risk of being unintelligible.

Now when the learner perfectly understands the alphabet, the words the letters stand for, and these rules, he must proceed to write sentences, which he may take from some book where the style is easy, and so continue it till he can write with some freedom and correctness, and not trouble himself with the reading till he is thus far master of the writing.

It is here proper to explain the tables for joining the characters. The use of them is to direct the learner (if he should be any time at a loss) how to join any two characters, the most easy and natural way.

In the top and left hand squares of the tables, there are placed some of our common letters, which direct to the

* In all such words as *memorial*, *title*, *none*, *people*, &c. which in short-hand are written *mmrl*, *ttl*, *nn*, *ppl*, the learner in naming these letters must not pronounce them double *mrl*, double *ttl*, double *nn*, nor double *pl*; but *m m r l*, *t t l*, *n n*, and *p p l*, which he will find will give the words their proper sound, or at least sufficient to be understood, which is all that is required.

† These terminations always carry the vowel, if any, before them as *ation*, *ition*, *otion*, or *ution*, &c.

characters sought for. Example : Suppose it was required to find *k* and *m* joined, look in the square opposite *m*, and under *k*, you have *k* and *m* properly joined. Again, in the other table, to find *s* and *n*, look in the square opposite *n* and under *s*, you have *s* and *n* joined; and so on for any two characters required. Those squares that are dotted signify nothing.

The learner is requested to observe, that the alphabet, and the few simple terminations explained in the preceding Rules, are all the characters requisite to be grounded on the memory; the rest being given only for examples of ease and instruction to the learner.



INSTRUCTIONS FOR READING.

It has been observed, that the learner should write short-hand correctly, before he makes any attempt to read it; because the more accurate he is, in his own writing, the easier he will decipher. It may at first, seem more difficult to him to read than write, but practice and attention will soon render it easy and familiar.

When the learner at first attempts to decipher what he has written in short-hand, the best way, in my opinion, is to transcribe it in common hand; and for his assistance in so doing he must proceed with telling the letters one by one (giving each letter its full sound in the words he does not know by sight) and so continue writing and deciphering, till, in a short time, practice and perseverance will make it so completely easy, that he will be able to read it, without the trouble of transcribing. But to endeavor to read before he can write, will only be embarrassing himself with that which will follow of course.

It is much easier for a person to decipher his own writing than that of others, as he cannot fail of having some idea of the subject upon which he has written; so that by carrying the sense of what goes before his mind, and paying a due regard to the connexion, the reading part of this science will be sooner acquired than the learner may at first imagine.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR ABBREVIATING.

When the practitioner has made himself master of the instructions before given, and can write by them with some degree of ease, he must then proceed further, and make himself acquainted with a regular method of contraction, in order to enable him the easier to take down debates, lectures, sermons, trials, or any public speeches; which cannot well be attained without further *brevity*, and for which a few necessary rules will be given, though the method of writing by the former rules will be found a great saving of time, and sufficient for every other purpose where writing is required; yet there are many reasons why the practitioner should use himself to abbreviate, because he has not only the advantage of writing more expeditiously, but with six times the ease. The writing will likewise appear much more beautiful, and practice will render it as easy to be read as when written by the former rules.

By the tenth rule in the Instructions for Writing, the learner is directed to use the letter *m*, for the terminations *ment* or *ments*; so, in like manner, we can by practice use most of the other letters for terminations, which at times may be found useful when expedition is necessary; but the following may at all times be used with propriety—*b*, will serve for the terminations *ble*, or *able*,—*f*, for *full*,—*n*, for *ness*,—*s*, for *self*,—*w*, for *ward*,—and *sh*, for *ship*,—as in the words *considerable*, *lawful*, *fulness*, *himself*, *forward*, *friendship*, &c. &c.

We can by a little practice in *brevity* express many words by a less number of consonants than are used in the spelling of them. We can often express words of many syllables, by two, three, or four of their first consonants. We can express many words by their initials only. We can omit many words in sentences, and yet leave the writing intelligible. And we can omit all the vowels, though they sound ever so strong at the beginning or end.—But this must be acquired by practice, and a regular course of contraction; by which the practitioner will find, that this desirable end of writing from a public speaker, though he shall speak uncommonly fast, can be accomplished, by this system, in a short time, and with much less trouble than he might at first imagine or believe.

The rules I am about to offer, are the result of many years' experience, and which the practitioner may depend upon as the surest method of contracting.

RULE I.

Of expressing words of many syllables by two, three or four of their first consonants.

All words consisting of two syllables and upwards, we have a greater power of contracting than monosyllables.—For instance; the word *possible*, may be written thus, *ps*; and the word *reputation*, thus, *rp*.—Example, *Is it possible that a man of reputation should descend so low?*—may be written thus, *Is it ps that a man of rp should descend so low?* Again, *He is a man of understanding, and deserves encouragement*; may thus be written, *He is a man of undr, and deserves nkrgr*.—And again; *Many odd circumstances occur in this transitory life*;—may be written thus, *Many odd srkm occur in this trns life*.—Greater liberties than these may be taken, when once this method becomes familiar; and yet the writing may be left intelligible, which must always be attended to.

RULE II.

Of expressing many words by their initials only.

The practitioner will find it a very easy matter to distinguish words and sentences by their initials, as the words in our language have a great dependency upon each other; and will admit of writing only the initial, where the word going immediately before will not leave it uncertain. Example, *He is the man whom you did so much justice to some time ago*;—could not be mistaken if written thus, *He is the man w you d so much justice to some t ago*. Again; *He is a young gentleman of a competent fortune*;—may be expressed thus, *He is a y gentleman of a competent f*.—The practitioner may also contract long words in the same sentences where he expresses others by their initials; as, *He is a y gnt of a kmp f*.—When once a person becomes acquainted with this way of writing, he will find no difficulty in deciphering, though he may afterwards make it fuller, if he pleases, or has occasion to lay the writing by for any time.*—The characters of the alphabet are only appointed to represent a few words, to prevent loading the memory; but it here plainly appears that the practitioner may use them for any word where the sense will supply it; and, that by writing only one word in full, the initial of the next is sufficient to express it.

* Any memorandums or other writing, that are intended to be laid aside, may be written without these contractions.

RULE III.

Of omitting words in sentences.

Many words in sentences (particularly monosyllables) may be omitted, and yet leave the writing intelligible, as the sense will supply the deficiency.—Example, *Hear my law, O my people : incline your ears unto the words of my mouth :*—may be contracted thus, *Hear law, my people : incline ears to words my mouth.* Which cannot be mistaken, if the practitioner wishes to make sense of what he deciphers.—Again ; *I will open my mouth in a parable : I will declare hard sentences of old : which we have heard and known : and such as our fathers have told us : that we should not hide them from the children of the generations to come ; but to shew the honor of the Lord, his mighty and wonderful works that he hath done ;*—may be sufficiently expressed thus, *I open mouth in parable ; I declare hard sentences old ; which we heard and known : and such as fathers told us ; that we not hide them from children of generations come : but to shew honor of Lord, his mighty wonderful works he done.*

These demonstrations clearly shew the utility of this rule, when expedition is required. The practitioner may leave out such words in a sentence as best answer his purpose ; and he should also observe, that as he has omitted words in sentences, for the sake of expedition, so by the dependence of one word upon another in our language, he will be able to ascertain the words that are omitted, and thereby make good the sentence, without the least difficulty.

RULE IV.

Of the omission of all the vowels.

All the vowels may be dispensed with in expeditious writing, and the writer may affix them at his leisure, which I would recommend him not to neglect, if he intends laying the writing aside for any length of time. Though there is no occasion for omitting the dots, or vowels, at the beginning or end of words, except when we are obliged to follow a rapid speaker ; yet I would advise, that this rule be put in practice as well as others ; because the writer ought not to be at a loss in any thing that tends to facilitate the writing, but to be perfect master of the whole, and practice will soon make this omission as familiar as any other.

RULE V.

Of repetitions.

Repetitions of words and sentences often happen in a discourse ; and to save both trouble and time, in this case, the writer must observe, to draw a line with his pen under such words or sentences as are instantly repeated, which will denote that it is a repetition. But where a sentence is at different times repeated, and the writer has written it once, he need afterwards only write a word or two of such sentence, with the mark for &c.

Many words beginning with a vowel, we can express by the vowel and first consonant ; or if the word has a termination, by adding that termination to such vowel and consonant. Many words beginning with a consonant, we can express by their first consonant and following vowel ; or when there is a termination, by writing the first consonant and termination only.

I would advise the practitioner not to be too anxious to abbreviate much at first, but go on by degrees, always contriving to leave his writing so that he may not be at a loss in deciphering it.

There are very few, I believe, that are in a line of business where much writing is required, but accustom themselves to abbreviate more or less, particularly the gentlemen of the law ; therefore it cannot appear more difficult to abbreviate in short-hand, than in the common way of writing.—When despatch is required, it is enough if we make out what we commit to paper ; and as we can in sentences express words by one or two letters sufficiently to be understood, there can be no reason why a man should accustom himself to write more of a word than he has occasion for at such times.

When the young short-hand writer first attends a court of justice, or other public place, in order to take notes, he should not attempt to write the whole, but merely the heads of what is then said. It is natural to suppose, that he will at first be somewhat confused, which may prevent him from writing with that degree of ease, or expedition, which he has been able to do when alone ; but he ought to guard against this timidity, and not suffer himself in the least to be discouraged, though he should fail in his first, second, third, or more attempts ; but let him persevere, and a little practice of this kind will soon enable him to write the whole of whatever is delivered.

Nothing hitherto has been said concerning figures, but I shall here mention what is requisite.—Our common figures may be used in all cases, and are sufficiently expeditious; nor will they interfere with the writing, except the *one* when written by itself, which in this case need never be used, it being better to write a dot and *n* for one, than to make use of the figure.

Where figures are required to be written, they ought, for distinction sake, to be made something larger than the short-hand; and when cyphers are to be added to any number of figures, make so many dots thus, 87..., which will signify 87,000. And so on for any number except 10, which may be written larger as above mentioned, or else *tn* in short-hand.

The stops used in common writing, may be used in this short-hand, except the period or full point, which is distinguished by a wider space than common, and in my opinion is the only distinction of this kind necessary to be noticed in expeditious writing. When despatch is required, we have no time for writing stops; but at other times they may be used at pleasure, though a comma, and the aforesaid method of denoting a fresh sentence will always be sufficient, even if the writing is intended to be laid aside.

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Pamph.

Bb.

Author Taylor, Samuel

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